

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)[Pressroom](#) (web)[CEO Hotline](#)[Metro Projects](#)[Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)[Archives](#)[Events Calendar](#)[Research Center/
Library](#)[Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)[Metro Classifieds](#)[Retirement
Round-up](#)

Metro Info

[Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)[Org Chart](#) (pdf)[Policies](#)[Training](#)[Help Desk](#)[Intranet Policy](#)

Need e-Help?

Call the Help Desk
at 2-4357

[E-Mail Webmaster](#)

MTA's Top Stories of 2003:

Year Began with Great Momentum, But Hit a Wall with Strike

By BILL HEARD, Editor



VIPs, Pyrotechnics Welcome Opening of Metro Gold Line The future arrived at Union Station in a burst of pyrotechnics, July 25, when a gleaming white train burst through a large "Discover Gold" banner to the applause of several hundred officials, MTA staff and guests.

In this report: The Year's Top Stories

[January](#)
[July](#)[February](#)
[August](#)[March](#)
[September](#)[April](#)
[October](#)[May](#)
[November](#)[June](#)
[December](#)

(Jan. 23, 2004) The year 2003 began with great momentum as MTA moved forward in January with the beginning of construction of the San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway – now the Metro Orange Line – and the purchase of new high-capacity buses.

It picked up steam through the spring with the introduction of new transit passes, the implementation of a countywide bus signal priority project and with the opening in July of the Metro Gold Line.

But, progress was brought to a screeching halt – a painful 35-day hiatus – when MTA's 1,900 maintenance employees and 5,600 members of three other unions walked off the job. "Lifeline" bus service filled some of the gap for stranded customers, while employee volunteers staffed phone lines and cleaned buses and train cars.

With the end of the strike in mid-November, wheels started to turn again. The Mobility 21 transportation summit was a success; the "CompoBus" made its debut; and a key bridge on the Metro Orange Line was completed.

Despite the stop-and-go character of 2003, it's fair to say that MTA managed to make progress and can record some significant accomplishments.

Here, month-by-month is a look back at the top MTA stories in 2003.

January

Crews began construction of a bridge over the Los Angeles River in Van Nuys, Jan. 17, a major step in the San Fernando Valley Metro Rapid Transitway project. The 14-mile, \$329.5 million dedicated busway will have 13 stations between the North Hollywood Metro Rail station and Warner Center when opened in 2005.

The MTA Board appointed William Waters as the agency's new Inspector General, replacing Arthur Sinai. Waters had been acting Inspector General since July 2002.

Taking advantage of an option to purchase more high-capacity buses, the MTA Board approved the acquisition of 70 additional 45-foot, CNG "CompoBus" coaches. The low-floor "CompoBus" will seat 46 passengers, 16 percent more than the traditional 40-foot buses.



Sr. Security Officer Arthur Grant patrols aboard a new Segway. MTA received its first electrically-driven, gyroscope-stabilized Segway "human transporters" for

February

The Board approved five new transit pass programs, including a one-day pass, a pass for those on jury duty, one for such large organizations as colleges and government agencies, and two for employers.

The Board awarded a \$138.9 million contract to North American Bus Industries for 200 low-floor CNG articulated buses. The buses will be direct replacements for diesel buses that will be removed from the fleet within the next three years.

As part of an effort to improve bus transit schedule adherence and speed up travel times, MTA began implementing the

INSPIRATIONS: 2003



Division 7's Roy Allen made an inspirational comeback as an active Metro Bus operator. Facing a life or death decision, he agreed to have his left leg amputated rather than die from a blood condition. After therapy and training, he was permitted to drive again and returned to the job he loves.



Gateway Division 10 Operator Gregory Scott won praise from a passenger, who was in Los Angeles on a business trip from Mexico, when he recovered her purse containing nearly \$1,300, a passport and a plane ticket.



Call it beginner's luck. Operator Majd Bakir may have saved a patron's life with a technique he used for the first time since he learned it 13 years ago –

use by law enforcement and security personnel who patrol MTA facilities. "The Segways will enhance our foot patrol and help in our special assignment areas," said Sgt. John Davis, MTA Transit Security.

Countywide Bus Signal Priority Project, a program designed to ensure that even the county's smaller cities can have Metro Rapid service.

March

Sheriff's Capt. Dan Finkelstein, a 27-year law enforcement veteran, was named MTA's Chief of Transit Police – a first-of-its-kind arrangement to consolidate the agency's security forces and improve safety for employees and patrons.

MTA and Los Angeles Superior Court teamed up to offer weekly transit passes to jurors in exchange for their vehicle mileage reimbursement.

It was "A Night of Stars" aboard the Queen Mary in Long Beach Harbor for 256 MTA employees who were honored for their excellent performance over the past five years. Each honoree received a bronze medallion and a 2002 Metro Gold Star Award lapel pin.

April

The Regional Rebuild Center celebrated the opening, April 4, of its new chemical warehouse. The warehouse is designed to be environmentally safe for storage of hazardous materials, as well as to make handling of materials easier for employees.

Twenty-three employees were recalled to military duty for the war in Iraq. A total of 14 are serving with Army units, four with Air Force units, three with the Marine Corps and two with the Navy. The group includes two women – an Air Force Reservist and an Army Reservist.

May

The first two Sheriff's Department fare inspectors took their posts on the Metro Red Line, May 13 – the first of a force of 50 selected to serve in the subway and on the Metro Gold Line.

Paleontologists working on MTA property have unearthed a small section of a mammoth tusk approximately 10,000 to 70,000 years old. MTA donated the fossil to the Museum of Natural History.

With blasting hip-hop music and heart-stopping video images, MTA introduced its new "Metro Experience" mobile theater. The agency hopes to reach a young, impressionable audience with a rail safety message.

the Heimlich Maneuver. Bakir successfully applied the life-saving technique when a passenger appeared to be choking.



At age 21, Raven Sanders graduated with honors from USC as salutatorian and received a full scholarship to medical school – all while working as a bus operator at Venice Division 6.



North Los Angeles Division 3 Operator Randy Montes – a Marine Corps reservist – was relieved to have made it home safely from Iraq. The 33-year-old lance corporal says the duty was frustrating, scary and boring at times.



MTA's Dave Schlesinger was among members of Mayor James Hahn's Crisis Response Team who were honored by the City of Los Angeles for providing on-scene crisis intervention services to victims and families.



John A. Dyer, 66, who led the SCRTD for almost six and a half years in the 1980s – including through the early days of Metro Red Line funding and construction – died at his Glendale home of a heart attack. In this mid-1980's photo, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, at left, commends Dyer for his “many accomplishments and continued support for transportation systems that serve the Southern California region.”

MTA and the Sheriff's Department marked the debut of the nation's second largest Transit Police force as LASD assumed responsibility for law enforcement throughout the Metro system.

After more than a year of operating on a bare-bones system, Metro Gold Line crews witnessed the completion of the Midway Yard.

June

Investigators from MTA's Transit Services Bureau and the Los Angeles Department of Transportation arrested 20 unlicensed drivers and impounded 47 “bandit vans” used to carry passengers in violation of city and state laws.



Gale “Ed” Vandeventer, 61, who led SCRTD Rail Operations from 1985 through the mid-1990s – including the early days of Metro Rail subway and light-rail planning – died, June 5, of a heart attack.

The Board approved staff plans to repaint Metro Buses and Metro Rail cars in colors that clearly identify each vehicle with the type of service it provides. Bright red continues to signify Metro Rapid service, California poppy orange denotes local bus service and a crisp blue will be used in the future on express buses. All Metro Rail cars will either be painted silver or will retain their stainless steel appearance.

The Metro Rapid bus program reached another milestone with the start of service on Van Nuys Boulevard and Florence Avenue.

July

A gleaming white train bursting through a large “Discover Gold” banner marked the opening of the Metro Gold Line -- the first time in almost 50 years that downtown Los Angeles and communities along the way to

Pasadena had been connected by light-rail service.

A Los Angeles County Grand Jury study of Workers' Compensation praised MTA for a “comprehensive and effective program that is beginning to show bottom-line results.” Measures taken by MTA resulted in a startling 29 percent reduction in new Workers' Comp claims, among other successes.

August

MTA and Flexcar, the nation's largest and oldest provider of car-sharing programs, officially launched an innovative on-demand service during a media event at MTA Headquarters.

The MTA Board of Directors approved a six-year Short Range Transportation Plan that focuses on the phasing-in of transportation improvements in Los Angeles County through 2009.

September

CEO Roger Snoble announced the hiring of Rick Thorpe, one of the most highly regarded builders of light rail systems in the United States, as executive officer for MTA project management.

U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta presented MTA Board Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky with federal grants totaling \$45 million.

West Hollywood Division 7 Transportation Manager Jim McElroy was named general manager of the Westside/Central Service Sector.

Deputy CEO John Catoe described a future in which MTA will route its buses through a network of 15 to 18 regional transit "hubs" – including Metro Rail stations – connected by "spokes" of express service lines. MTA is expected to begin the shift to a "hub and spoke" system in mid-2004.

The MTA Board approved an agreement with RAD Jefferson, LLC, to exchange MTA's antiquated bus yard property in Venice for construction of a new bus division in a more centralized, industrial area of West Los Angeles.

October

Led by Local 1277 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, some 7,600 mechanics, bus operators, clerks, custodians and unionized supervisors walked off the job just after midnight, Oct. 14, to begin what would become a 35-day work stoppage.

With the strike against MTA in full swing, non-striking employees pitched in wherever they could to assist stranded commuters. Some 75 volunteers staffed the Customer Information Center. A skeleton crew manned Bus Operations Control. Dozens of others took mops, scrapers and towels in hand and cleaned hundreds of Metro Bus coaches and Metro Rail cars.

MTA worked with local transit agencies in Los Angeles and surrounding counties to expand a "lifeline" of services for passengers stranded by the transit strike.

Members of Teamsters Local 572 went on strike against First Transit Inc., Oct. 15, taking 12 MTA contract lines out of service.

With negotiations deadlocked on Oct. 28, the MTA Board declared an impasse after 17 months of contract talks with the ATU. At the Board's instruction, CEO Roger Snoble issued a last, best and final offer to the mechanics union.

A multi-agency task force, formed by MTA to review bus-operating procedures following the Sept. 9 shooting of three Taft High School

students, recommended a broad series of steps to improve the safety of LAUSD students.

On Oct. 29, six Metro Buses – driven by transportation operations supervisors – lined up at dawn outside LA's Fire Academy to transport some 50 firefighters and their equipment to the front lines of a 45-mile fire that threatened communities in the area.

On Oct. 31, MTA officials said they would not support binding arbitration or the intervention of an outside arbitrator in its negotiations with the ATU.

First Transit Inc. and Teamsters Local 572 reached a tentative agreement in a labor dispute that had sidelined 12 MTA contract bus lines.

November

Members of the ATU turned down MTA's last, best and final offer in a Nov. 7 vote by a margin of 1,267 to 87. Expressing disappointment, MTA noted that its offer amounted to more than \$30 million over the contract period.

Almost 500 local officials, community leaders, businesspeople and others gathered, Nov. 17, for the Mobility 21 transportation summit aimed at bringing more state and federal funding to bear on the increasing congestion of the region's transportation network.

On Nov. 17 – 35 days after it began – the 2003 strike ended when MTA and the ATU announced a tentative contract agreement. The agreement left the Health and Welfare Trust Fund issue still to be resolved. Final agreements also had yet to be reached with the UTU, representing bus and train operators, and the TCU, representing clerks and custodians.

ATU members ratified the contract agreement with MTA, Nov. 19. The agreement called for mediation and arbitration on the still-unresolved Health and Welfare Trust Fund issue.

As of Nov. 19, nearly 100 percent of Metro Bus lines were back in operation. Metro Rail trains went back into partial service, Nov. 20. Many passengers, relieved to see Metro service rolling again, welcomed operators back with open arms – and even some applause.

December

Sheriff's deputies filed charges against three teenagers suspected of causing more than \$175,000 in graffiti vandalism damage to Metro Buses and bus stops in downtown Los Angeles, the South Bay and the San Fernando Valley.

The "CompoBus," a prototype transit coach that will become a featured element of the Metro Bus fleet was introduced during ceremonies in Anniston, Ala. The "CompoBus" is a 45-foot coach made of a lighter-weight, crash-resistant fiberglass composite. It features contoured windshields and a stylish retro look.

The first of three key bridges to be built for the San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway was completed Dec. 12. The 525-foot bridge over the Los Angeles River is an element of the San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway.

MTA and the UTU reached a tentative agreement, Dec. 18, on a new three-year labor contract. The UTU represents 5,000 bus and rail operators.

Current and former leaders of MTA dedicated a plaque honoring former SCRTD General Manager John A. Dyer as “father of the Los Angeles County subway system.” The plaque will be mounted at the Wilshire/Vermont Metro Red Line station. Dyer died of a heart attack, May 3, in Glendale.

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)